

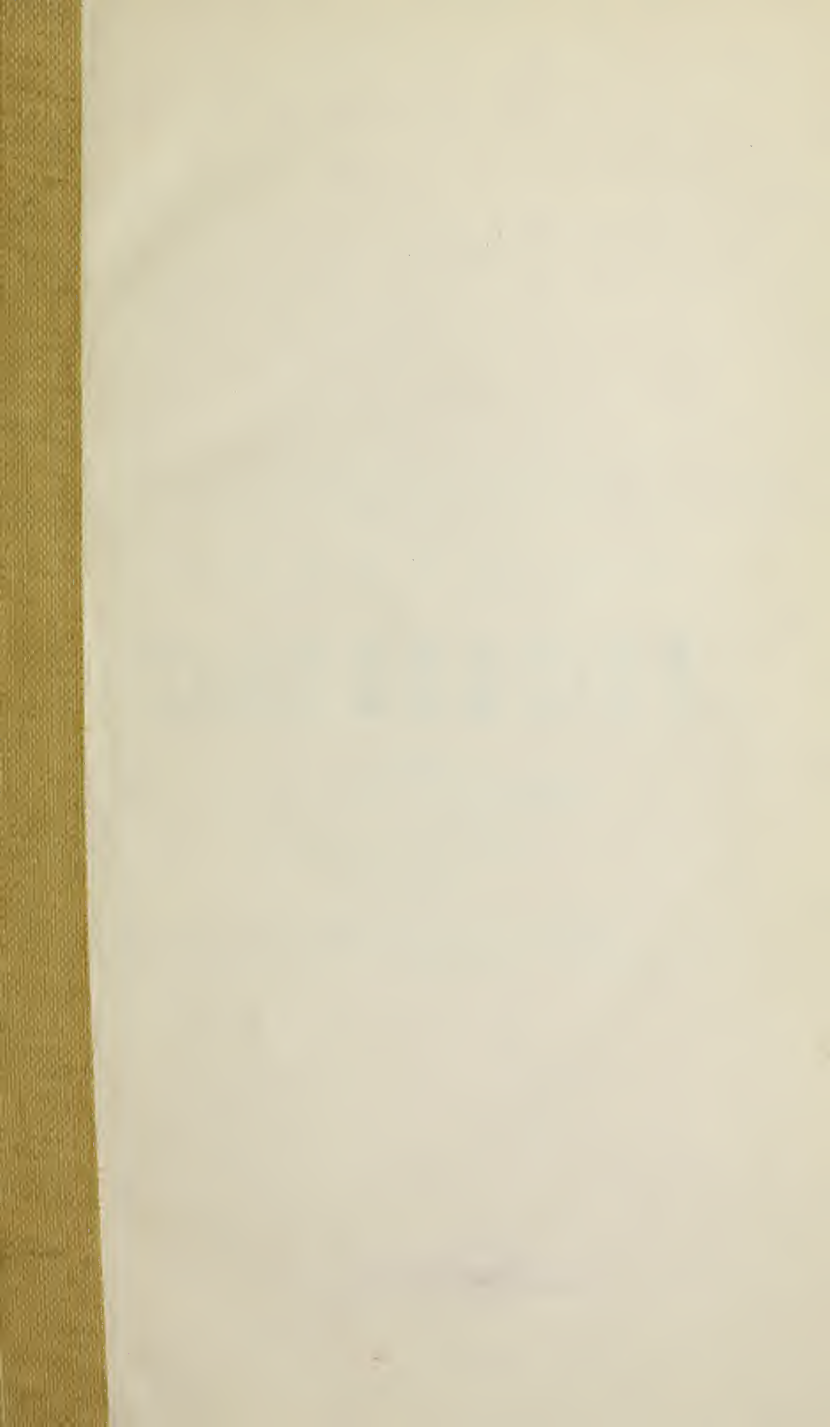
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WALKER

PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION.

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PRACTICAL
CO-OPERATION.

By
E. C. WALKER,
VALLEY FALLS, KANS.
E. M. 285.

Practical
CO-OPERATION;

A
SERIES OF ARTICLES

BY
E. C. WALKER,

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334
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PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION.

No. I.

With no special privileges granted to favored individuals and classes possessing large wealth, there would be wisdom in calling upon outside capital to come in and establish manufactories. Capitalistic production would not then be the colossal evil that it is now. But the monopolization of credit, the monopolization of transportation, the restrictions on commerce and domestic exchange, and the monopolization of land, utterly prevent anything approaching to fair competition, and put the employees of manufactories completely at the mercy of the latter. Capital, through money, absorbs the main portion of the earnings of the producer, leaving him, on the average, a bare subsistence, and when the panics and convulsions come, brought about chiefly by the monopolization of credit, he finds himself out of employment, want and suffering staring him in the face, with the market glutted with the productions of his labor, while millions like himself are unable to procure enough of them to satisfy their most immediate and pressing wants.

To our friends at Liberal who are pleading for capital to come in and open up industries which shall furnish employment to its people, I have a few earnest words to say. You read the news of the day, and you therefore know what is the condition of the workingmen and workingwomen of the manufacturing districts of this country at the present. You know that panic, failure, closed doors of workshops, unemployed men, destitution are everywhere. You know that factories, foundries, workshops of all kinds are either running on short time or are now closed, and this too, on the approach of winter. You know that different manufactories engaged in the production of the same goods, are consolidating so as to reduce production, and consequently throw more men out of employment. You know, or should know if you are prudent, careful men and women, wisely concerning yourselves with your own permanent happiness and that of your children, that

JUL 14 1954 SLOCUM.

Robert Ingersoll Ref 1 Mar 47 Read aloud

there is no class of workers in this country occupying a more unenviable position than that known as the skilled wage workers, no other class which is so dependent, so enslaved, so utterly at the mercy of others as is this class which embraces the employees of the factories and manufacturing, the laborers in the coal and other mines, and all in fact, who are directly employed by monopolized and privileged capital, chartered and supported by the State.

Do the Liberal citizens of "the only Liberal town in the world" wish to enroll themselves or any portion of their number, in the ranks of capital's dependents? Do they wish to look for their livelihood to a system of production which promises them, judging the future by the past and present, nothing but mere subsistence and keeps them forever in doubt as to the continuance of their employment on these shameful terms, even.

It makes but little difference what kind of an employer you have; however just, humane and liberal he may be, he is in the fatal current and must drift with it or inevitably sink beneath the waves of bankruptcy; sink as have uncounted thousands of small employers, who before him have essayed to live in the same waters with the larger fish of their own species and the sharks of monopolized credit. When the markets are full of the productions of his mills or mines, he must reduce production or close entirely for a time, though you, his employees, are dependent upon your daily labor therein for the food, shelter, and clothing of yourselves and children. Giant usury exacts so much tribute from him each day, and it must be forthcoming. So long as he can find a ready market for the fruits of your labor, you and the consumers of these fruits pay this tribute; every cent of it. But when the market is "overstocked," as it is falsely called; that is, really, when the monopolizers of credit and transportation have rendered it impossible for the people to buy and consume what they actually need,—when this state of affairs is reached, I say, your employer must reduce expenses, lest he shall pay a portion of this blood money, and so your wages are cut down or work ceases entirely, and you find yourselves with nothing to do and nothing with

which to supply your daily wants.

These are the sad, stubborn, undeniable facts concerning the manufacturing business as it is organized under our existing industrial and financial systems. Now what shall we do? We need the employment, we need the manufactories, we need the productions of these manufactories. Our people have not half the manufactured goods which they need, and which the amount of labor they perform entitles them to have.

What is the remedy? This I shall endeavor to show in future issues of this paper, and will say now that it is summed up in these few words—ORGANIZE YOUR OWN CREDIT AND EMPLOY YOURSELVES.

PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION.

Self-Employment.

No. II.

In my first article under this head I called the attention of the readers of the *LIBERAL* to the injustice, the uncertainty of continuous employment, the meagre returns of the laborer, and especially to the fact that under it the employee always pays all the exactions of the usurer when his employer's business is successful, of our system of capitalistic production.

Next permit a few words relative to the important position occupied by the town of Liberal at this juncture.

Platforms, theories, generalities, ideals, etc., etc., are very useful in their way, and we never lack a sufficiency of them. But unless they lead to practical action for the improvement of the condition of Humanity, they are barren and worthless. The condition of our race is not an enviable one. Happiness is merely a dream to most, while physical comfort is denied to uncounted millions. The rankest injustice prevails in every department of human activity. The grossest inequalities, inequalities not born of natural difference of organization and of inherited capabilities, are manifest in whichever way we turn our gaze. The toiler reaps not where he sows, and gaunt women and pinched, emaciated, dwarfed children cry in vain for the merest necessities of life. The culture and refinement which to day should be the portion of all our fellow creatures are denied to vast numbers even in this nature favored land of ours. They have no time to spare from the bitter battle for bread to cultivate their minds, to revel in the delights of art, literature, and science. They know few of the joys of childhood. The struggle for existence begins early, and they enter factory, workshop, mine, and the ranks of prostitution, ere the bloom of childhood has faded from their cheeks. Year by year employment grows more uncertain. Year by year the ranks of these serfs of capital are thinned by the diseases engendered by want and vice, and year by year they are more than filled by recruits drawn from the classes just

above them and by their own increase. And this augmentation of the numbers of the very poor, this increase of poverty, vice, and wretchedness, is in direct ratio to the increase of the wealth of and in the numbers of millionaire merchant princes, of bond and bank barons, of land kings and government and corporation cormorants.

And all this after these many centuries of Christianity! The million dollar cathedral towers above the huts of the abjectly poor, and the priest of god lifts his voice in eloquent defence of the powers that be, and of all popular institutions. Arrayed against the Church stands Free thought, Liberalism. What will Liberalism do? Not what will Liberalism *say*, not what will it *promise*, but what will it *do*? This is the crucial test. Will it practice for us a new and better code of commercial ethics? Will it make honesty and justice practicable rules of business? Will it show to the world an example of manufacturing and mercantile integrity, now nowhere to be found in all the centres of American production and distribution? Will it convey morals into everyday life, and make of Equity a judge of our acts? Will it show us how to give to each the full fruits of his or her toil? Will it do this, or will it ignobly fail in its attempt to solve these hard problems of human necessity? Shall it, like Christianity, be overthrown in its grapple with the realities of existence or shall it gloriously succeed and become in deed and in fact the Gospel of Humanity, into Salvation from want and woe, from wrong and all injustice? "What shall the harvest be" of all this seed of Freethought and Liberalism sown during these recent years as well as in times more remote?

These questions, momentous in the possibilities of human happiness or misery of which they hint; now so often addressed to Liberalism, have an especial and weighty meaning for the town of Liberal. You have gathered there many intelligent and earnest men and women. You purpose to make of your town, an example for all the world. You desire to show what Liberalism can do for Humanity. You wish to establish there the democracy of equal rights. You would gladly give to every one

the freest and fullest opportunity for the development of every capacity for usefulness and happiness. You hope that none among you may be idle, vicious, or criminal. The desire to educate the whole man, the whole woman, is paramount to all else, I hope and trust. You would inform, elevate, refine, and beautify the minds and characters of all who dwell in your midst.

This is a grand ambition, a noble purpose. But how shall this transcendently important work be accomplished? This is the practical question. You will remember that there is no morality without justice, and justice itself is impossible where liberty is denied; for the denial of liberty is the perpetration of injustice. Liberty and justice, then, are essential. They are the foundation principles of all honest and equitable institutions, associations and societies.

After this long preamble, I shall, in my next, proceed to indicate wherein, as I am convinced, Liberal can practicalize the aspirations of her people and develop the highest types of manhood and womanhood, upon the enduring basis of liberty, justice, social equity, commercial honesty, and industrial independence.

PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION.

Self-Employment.

· NO. III.

The people of Liberal want remunerative employment. They also want independence. They do not want to be at the mercy of masters nor in the clutch of usurers. How to obtain this employment, to attain to this independence, to be free from the caprice of employers, to receive and enjoy all the fruits of their labor, is the problem which they must solve if they are to be free, self respecting, prosperous and happy.

There are various manufacturing industries which could be started upon the co operative basis and be made successful. Among these may be named the canning of fruits and vegetables, pottery, the manufacture of sugar from cane, leather works, tin works, furniture works, etc , etc.

But the canning business seems to be the most immediately available, and to the consideration of that we will for a short time address ourselves. Let all who feel interested in the enterprise combine, determined to succeed, and each contribute what he or she can in labor, material, or money, receiving therefor a labor exchange note issued by the canning company, non interest bearing, payable in the manufactured goods of the company at their average cost value, and receivable as a medium of exchange by the co operators. Gradually, these notes would come to be regarded and accepted, by your townspeople, as the best and cheapest medium of local exchange, and the same would be true of similar notes issued by other co operative industries. These notes would not be payable by the company until a certain specified time after the date of issuance, thus giving the co-operators time to transform their labor and raw material into manufactured products. This interval between issuance and payment would be gradually lessened as the business of the co operators increased and there was a stored surplus of products. Subsequently as an outside market was developed, the redemption of the exchange notes in current

money instead of manufactured goods, would become necessary, sometimes.

The original co operators, with others coming in from time to time, could extend the business by starting other industries, or separate groups would be formed, according to the necessities of the work or the inclination of the various workers.

In the first place, all who should contribute of labor, material, or money, would feel an absorbing interest in the success of the enterprise. Each would feel that upon him or her rested the responsibility for the good or ill fortune which should attend the experiment, and all would realize that here was an opportunity to reap the full fruits of their toil, in so far as it is possible so to do before a large portion of our people shall readjust their business affairs upon this just, safe, and remunerative basis. How this good work can be supplemented by a Labor Product Exchange Bureau, I shall endeavor to make plain in a subsequent paper of this series.

In the canning business, you could produce almost everything needed yourselves; that is, each of the co-operators would supply some want, and the stock for your cans, the cooking utensils required, the paper and ink used in the preparation of labels, etc., etc., would be purchased at wholesale rates with the aggregate of the small sums of money contributed by such of the co operators as have it to put into the enterprise. You would make your own cans, print your own labels, construct your own buildings, provide your own fuel, raise your own fruits and vegetables and, in short, *co-operate* for your individual and mutual good. There is some one among you who will gladly devote the land needed, or who will become a co operator to the extent of its reasonable value, receiving for it the non interest bearing exchange notes, payable in installments as the business develops. Your farmers and gardeners will become co operators, raising the crops necessary in the business. Peas, string beans, tomatoes, lima beans, sweet corn, and succotash, would yield you the quickest returns and would furnish work until the small fruits adapted to your climate and soil could be

planted and brought into bearing. Then many of the beeves now shipped from your station in stock cars, could be sent to market as canned corned beef, while the hides, horns, hoofs, and bones could be worked into manufactured articles by your people, while the viscera would contribute to the fertilization of your fields and gardens. Putting up pickles, evaporation of fruits, manufacture of vinegar, making of jellies and jams, preparation of crushed and whole grains of cereals, and the making of starch are all branches which could be added later as time and experience gave you means and skill.

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Self-Employment.

No. IV.

The manufacture of furniture and woodenware ought also to engage your attention. The forests of Arkansas are accessible to you, and in them you would find abundant material for which you could exchange the various farm and manufactured products of this part of the country. In this you would need more machinery and more means, but beginning on a small scale, and making the excellence of your work your first consideration, you would ere long find yourselves in a position of comparative independence. One of the most necessary things for a co operative community is to be independent of the money lender. This can be partly effected by the use of the Labor Exchange note, which, in time, will develop into the Exchange bank, and for the rest we must depend upon wise forethought and cool business management. Strive to establish such industries as shall give employment, congenial employment, to all your citizens. You should labor to make your town so home like and attractive in every way that your young people will not desire to go elsewhere to "seek their fortunes." Aim to produce all that you can consume; that is, of course, all that the resources of your soil and your accessibility to the sources of supply of the raw material entering into manufactures, will enable you to produce. Do not fear that commerce will languish should you become, within the limits here indicated, self feeding and self clothing. You will have plenty of wants which the laborers of other places, of other states, and of other countries alone can supply.

Another important work for you will be to devise and perfect the best system of domestic co operation. A steam laundry is a pressing necessity with you now, as it is with every other town and village which has not one already. Such a laundry, managed by those who have an aptitude for the work and therefore can obtain the best results, would be of inestimable advantage to you all.

There are two possible plans for carrying on this work successfully. One is to co operate in the purchase of utensils, materials, etc., paying in proportion to the number of people in each family and paying in a similar way for services of those who do the work. The other plan would be to pay those who attend to the business so much per piece, as in ordinary laundries, but reserving an agreed upon per cent each week until the contribution of each member has been returned to him or her in work. This would result in eventually giving the workers full possession of the tools. Or the workers could be paid by the piece, and the co operators retain possession of tools, etc.

Next, we have the cooking department, which should be similarly conducted. As in the laundry business, the cost of all articles to those using them will be determined by adding the separate items of first cost of materials, the cost of fuel, wear of utensils, labor services of the workers, etc., etc., and striking an average showing, say, the cost of bread per pound, of cakes the same, of pies per dozen, baked meats per pound, etc. Whatever could be most conveniently provided in this way would be cooked at the co-operative bakery and in the co operative kitchen, while vegetables and such other articles of food as are more subject to the law of individual taste, would continue to be prepared in the family kitchen and in the boarding house and hotel. Here again we should have the advantage of the division of labor, which woman has not anywhere nearly equally shared with her brother. The best materials can thus be used with the least waste, and the most skilled culinary workers employed. The time is coming when all food will be thus prepared, and served in well aired and tastefully adorned dining rooms, where the odors from the kitchen, wash room and nursery never come, and where men and women and children gather to partake of good and healthful food, and to engage in enlivening and digestion assisting conversation. But this can never be while women are the slaves of the cook stove and the washtub, and come to the table heated, irritated, and often soiled and untidy. Woman must have much more time for intellectual cul

ture and for the training of her children, and that time she cannot have until we learn to combine our various forces and effect such changes in the kitchen, wash room, nursery, sewing room and other parts of the household as shall give her the benefit of modern invention and put her upon an equality with man in the possession of opportunities for physical and intellectual culture and recreation. Bad as is our present industrial system, man has some chance to choose his occupation. With woman, on the contrary, there is no alternative when once the cares of a family devolve upon her, unless she be wealthy. But if she is poor or in moderate circumstances only, she must be cook, washerwoman, nurse, chambermaid, sewing-woman, and girl of all work. No wonder that she gets discouraged and disgusted and says that she "hates housework." Who can blame her if she does? Her work is simply drudgery; it is not congenial; it does not stimulate to invention; it does not inspire to emulation in any considerable or exalted degree. But in such a system of co-operation as I have very briefly outlined, each woman would be apt to find some work to do which would be to her something more than a mere routine of "chores." Ambition would be called into play, skill would be developed, a just reward for work done would cheer and encourage, and at last we should find skilled women taking the same pride in and receiving the same pay for their labor as do skilled men.

Extending the principles of co operation into every department of human activity in your town and its vicinage, reaping the fruits of your own labors and robbing not others of theirs; giving each as full opportunity as possible to congenial work, and sharing in the benefits derived from your united but free labors, what a future may be yours! And all this is possible if you but begin aright.

PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION.

Self-Employment.

No. V.

I have said that what is called "overproduction" is really the inability of the people to purchase the articles which are necessary to their comfort and happiness. Of course, this statement did not express all I wished to say, and I will now indicate wherein our present system of production tends to make the poor poorer and the rich richer, without direct reference to the great cause already named,—Usury.

Where once the constant labors of all the race were necessary to provide for their physical needs, now, through the marvellous inventions of modern times, a few have been enabled to supply food, clothing, and shelter for thousands. This has inured somewhat to the benefit of the masses, but has generally and in a far greater degree tended to build up certain privileged classes, to the development of castes, which have subsisted upon the labor fruits of the toilers. No longer as in the palmy days of Rome, is the soldier simply a citizen and a laborer when not in active service. No longer is the priest the inventor, the discoverer, the physician, the conservator of learning. The soldier and the priest, the tax gatherer and the money lender, the protected manufacturer and the lawyer, are now all in the non producing class; all living upon the actual laborers, whether of brain or brawn, it does not matter. As I before stated, the monopolization of credit, of land, of mines, and of transportation, has made vast numbers of our people the helpless dependents of capital disassociated from labor. Added to these causes and helping to rivet the chains which they forge is machinery. In many instances, one man or even a child, tending a machine is able to produce in one day what it formerly would have taken hundreds of men the same length of time to produce. This is especially true in the manufacture of textile fabrics, but the same state of affairs prevails in other departments of production, as, for instance, in making of boots and shoes. "One shoe factory in Massa

chusetts turns out by patent machinery in twelve months as many pairs of boots and shoes as thirty thousand shoe makers can make by hand in the same time." The result of all this is that the market is glutted with those goods while men are vainly crying for work, and their families are upon the verge of destitution. No intelligent person needs to be told that somebody must be reaping a golden harvest from the field of human want, that these machines which cheapen production must be of immense advantage to somebody. Who is this favored individual? He assumes protean shapes; in one place, he is the office holder; in another, he is the protected manufacturer; in another, the land monopolist; in another, the monopolizer of credit; i. e., the banker and usurer. In each and every instance he is the one who absorbs the earnings of the laborer and appropriates to himself the net dividends resulting from the use of labor saving machinery.

What shall be done? Machinery is good in itself, and it should be a blessing instead of a curse to mankind. Had the laboring masses but possessed the wisdom which is their sorest need, they would long ere this have perceived that they must themselves own the machines they tend, and thus retain for their own use and benefit all that they produce. When all the surplus earnings of one thousand men go into the pockets of one man; when all the advantages that accrue from the use of machinery by these one thousand men are reaped by this one man, what can we expect but just what stares us in the face on every hand to-day? Hundreds of thousands of idle looms in the cotton manufacture; tens of thousands in the woolen; knit goods mills largely closed; in the neighborhood of 200 iron mills and furnaces closed, and unemployed men and women and children everywhere. What is the cause of all this idleness and consequent misery? Can not these men and women and children, by the aid of all this wonderful machinery, produce enough to keep them from want? To be sure they can, and do, but they get only a small portion of what they create. They need not work half so many hours as they now do to be twice as well provided for as they now are.

Co operation shall give them food and clothing and homes and education and recreation. This politics never has done and never can do. It puts them more and more into the power of their spoilers each year. They must combine their means, their brains, and their hands, and EMPLOY THEMSELVES. They must organize their own credit and gradually extricate themselves from the clutches of the State chartered and State protected monopolizers of money. They must organize Labor Products Exchange Bureaus to facilitate the equitable exchange of farm produce and manufactured goods. A certain number of people engaged in the co operative manufacture of cotton goods; others of woolen and knit goods; others in the production of boots and shoes; others in the mining of coal and iron; others in smelting; others in the making of machinery, and still others in the various branches of agriculture, etc., etc., could organize themselves into an Exchange Bureau and soon place themselves above want in spite of the protective tariff and all other robbing devices. Let the people of Liberal set the ball in motion. Beginning with the co-operative enterprises I have briefly outlined, sustained by the Labor Exchange note, destined to grow into the Peoples' Exchange Bank, and supplemented by the Labor Products Exchange Bureau, it is within your power to ring the death knell of monopoly and privilege, and usher in the glorious day of Liberty, Justice and Equity. It is not enough that the crude theological superstitions of the remote past are dying; the superstitions which most grievously afflict us of to-day are political, industrial, and social, and we must destroy them by supplanting with something better the unjust systems which they conserve.

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No. VI.

When there are abundant crops and a great amount of manufactured goods in the country, the people should not be in a state of need; should not suffer for the necessities of life. And yet they are in such a state; yet they do suffer. Since I began this series of articles, I have been travelling through Kansas, and never before have I heard so many complaints of hard times; never before have I found the people of any considerable portion of the West so pressed for ready means. Crops were abundant this season and the shops of the tradesmen were crowded with textile fabrics, with knit goods, with iron, wood and queensware, with table goods, in short, with all things needed in the household and upon the farm. But trade is dull. The crops remain in the cribs and bins, and the stock in the yards of the farm, and the goods upon the shelves of the merchant. Prices of agricultural produce are so low that farmers will not sell unless absolutely compelled by their wants to do so. On the other hand, the workingmen of the manufacturing districts are suffering for the food supplies for which there is no market. The piracy of our government, through the tariff, shuts in our faces the doors of the world's markets, while capitalistic production and monopoly of transportation, coupled with usury and monopolization of credit, make of our people the slaves of political and commercial gamblers and the dependents of money disassociated from and dominating labor.

How easily might all this be changed if the people were only wise enough to **HELP THEMSELVES**. Through co operation and exchange they can free themselves from the grasp of the money kings and transportation barons, of the protected manufacturers and the State which grants the protection. How this good work may be begun, I have briefly indicated, and now I will still more briefly sketch my ideal of the Township of the future.

Here is the village or town, comprised of houses built

for comfort and health; the houses being surrounded by pretty lawns and well tilled gardens; while the shops, manufactories and farms are located away from the dwelling, and the streets in all parts of the town are kept scrupulously clean, the most thorough drainage is provided, and fresh air and sunlight are ever welcome guests. On all sides away from the town stretch the groves, orchards, meadows, farm lands, and pastures, where are grown the finest fruits, where the choicest varieties of grains, grasses and vegetables are raised, and where the best of stock is grazing. The isolated farmhouse is the memory of the sad ages gone, and the crowded, filthy, and unhealthful city tenement is known no more. City and country have been combined and only the best of each has been retained. Here are beautiful parks with fountains and arbors and green houses and parterres of flowers; with birds and sweet perfumes, and all else that delights the senses of the rural denizen; and here also are to be found gymnasiums, bath houses,—water, air and sun—all facilities for youthful sports, aquariums, etc., etc., musical conservatories, libraries, reading rooms, scientific museums, laboratories, and whatever else shall conduce to the true culture and refinement of our race. The various everyday necessities shall be provided for by the individual and co-operative laundries, kitchens, bakeries, sewing rooms, etc., of which I have previously given short descriptions. Men and women have learned how to be happy, and in so learning they have ceased to oppress and rob each other. Machinery and free co-operation have enabled them to supply all their wants by a fair and healthful amount of labor, thus eliminating drudgery on the one hand and domineering and arrogant idleness on the other. Population is limited by wisdom and supported by liberty of production and exchange. Individuals, free to combine and to separate, have through Co-operation, the Labor Exchange note, the Exchange Bank, and the Labor Product Exchange Bureau, succeeded in establishing the free home and free society, wherein the rights of

all are sacredly respected, where each reaps as he or she has sown; and where association based on rights has been freed from tyranny and has established equity and independence.

ERRATA.

2nd page, after "even" in 16th line there should be an interrogation point.

5th page, 27th line, in place of "into" read *unto*.

8th page, 32nd line, "devote" read *donate*.

16th page, 10th line, for "were" substitute *are*. Same page, 15th line, for "farm" read *farmer*. Same page, last line, for "comprised" read *composed*.

Last paragraph, 23d line, omit "shall." Same paragraph, 25th line, for "shall be" read *are*.

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